

Abstract 102

TITLE: Public/Private Partnerships in HIV/STD Risk Reduction: Bar Outreach Targeting Men Who Have Sex With Men

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ISSUE: Men who have sex with men are at increased risk acquisition of HIV/STD's due to risk factors of unprotected anal intercourse, multiple sex partners, sex while under the influence of drugs/alcohol, history of STD's and perceived lack of susceptibility in rural regions. Further, rural and small city men who have sex with men may have less access to prevention/education efforts than their urban peers because of geography, few existing gay groups, non-existent gay media and a lack of meeting places.

SETTING: Community outreach in gay bars located in a rural and small city region.

PROJECT: To address high risk behaviors and limited opportunities for prevention among rural men who have sex with men, the Pennsylvania Department of Health Northcentral District Office initiated a collaborative effort with community-based AIDS agency, family planning/STD clinic agency, gay bar owners/bartenders and gay community committee to co-sponsor themed health outreach at bar parties. The events featured entertainment, condom games, door prizes, flu shots, Orasure HIV counseling/testing, hepatitis B immunizations, male and female condom distribution, chronic disease health risk appraisal and general health displays.

RESULTS: The collaborative community prevention approach included four health outreach bar parties reaching over 400 men who have sex with men. As a result of the events, a team approach to prevention was fostered among the groups/agencies/bar owners, men who have sex with men received immunizations or HIV counseling/testing, HIV/STD awareness was promoted, peer leaders were identified and trained, HIV/STD clinic promotion was initiated and community empowerment was achieved for future endeavors.

LESSONS LEARNED: The Pennsylvania Department of Health Northcentral District Office noted community agencies/clinics/gay group/bar owners can cooperate in HIV/STD prevention efforts. Further, small city and rural regions offer ideal opportunities for empowerment. Lastly, public health employee found men who have sex with men respond to focused intervention efforts such as one-on-one discussion, small group activities, humor in health promotion and social support mechanisms. The results reinforce the need for community-level interventions.

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